



Spotlight on the District

Judy Gooch

Head Lock and Dam Operator, Lockport Lock

By Mark Kane

Judith Gooch was the first female lock and dam operator when she started working at Lockport Lock in May 1990.

Gooch locks boats through the Lockport Lock on a regular basis like any other lock and dam operator at the location, but when she started at the lock she admits she was a little apprehensive about what everyone would think about her.

"It was kind of intimidating being the first women to work at this lock, but everyone made me feel right at home," said Gooch. "The only real concerns about working at the lock and being a woman were the physical challenges. Some of the things are real heavy, but everyone was helpful and taught me how to do it by myself.

"I was pleasantly surprised that I didn't run into negative attitudes when I got here, everyone made me feel real welcome," said Gooch.

She recommends that any women pondering the possibility of working at a lock and dam site is, "not to come into the job with any assumptions, and that actually goes for both sides," said Gooch.

Gooch decided to work at a Corps lock and dam site after taking close notice of someone very close to her.

"When I met my husband Dale, he was working at the Brandon Road Lock and Dam," said Gooch. "I observed what he did and thought his job was great ... I thought to myself, 'I can do that.'"



One of the things Gooch likes most about working at the lock is dealing with people.

"I like dealing with the tow industry and the customers," said Gooch. "In a nutshell, I'm a people person. I also really like the fact that I have an impact on how effectively boats lock through here, which saves taxpayers dollars."

Gooch says there are many aspects of Lockport Lock that make it a good location, but one stands out overall.

"It's the people that are here that make it good a location," said Gooch. "You have to work closely with people out here, and there's a lot of teamwork involved. We work all hours of the night, and it's almost like a little family."

The unique operations at the Lockport Lock are also a reason Gooch enjoys her work there.

"Some of the things you'll find at this lock that are unique include our list gate (at the upper end of the lock the gate drops into the water and the boats travel over the gate), the curved approaches at both ends of the lock, and the fact this is the highest drop on the Illinois Waterway ... approximately 40 feet," said Gooch. "All of these things can present different challenges for the tows, as well as a challenge for us to help them."

She also pointed out that Lockport Lock doesn't have a Corps-operated dam.

Gooch and her husband live in Morris, Ill. They have three children, a son, 23; daughter, 21; and their youngest son, 18.

Her hobbies include camping, embroidery and working with stained glass.

Gooch's advice to anyone reading this article is to, "treat others the way you want to be treated ... and above all else be safe no matter what."

"Spotlight Someone You Know"

The next District Spotlight employee could be working right beside you, the only way you'll see that person here is if you let me know it.

If you know someone who you

feel is doing a good job, setting a good example, or is just a pleasure to work around, maybe it's time the District knew it.

Ready to tell the rest of the District, then E-Mail me at:

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On the Cover

Contractors guide a 14-foot-tall stone monolith into place at the 375-million-year-old Devonian fossil gorge, located at Coralville Lake.

The monolith is one of nine monoliths that will mark the entrance to the plaza in front of the interpretive center that will showcase the fossil gorge.

Photo by Scott Ford, Coralville Lake.